

## **Historic, Archive Document**

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



# FARM PAPER LETTER

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

WSTA

Rm. 407-A  
(202) 447-5480  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Office of  
Information

2171

September 14, 1984

## THAT FISH STORY WAS EVEN BIGGER THAN WE CLAIMED

Before I wrote about the growing prominence of catfish in the U.S. farm economy, I checked the facts right down to the last decimal point. Since my inquiry was inspired by a reader who questioned whether USDA should put out catfish reports on grounds "that's not farming," I wanted to be sure this "fish story" avoided getting on the list of tall tales about "the one that got away."

Several readers wrote and called to agree that raising catfish IS farming. No surprise there.

What did surprise some readers was the size of today's catfish industry and expectations that fish will help brighten the U.S. balance of payments picture. The fact that the amount of catfish sold by U.S. farmers climbed from 10.5 million pounds in 1975 to 155 million pounds in 1983 isn't widely known.

Statistics show that catfish meat still is on the upswing. This past June, the total production was 10.7 million pounds, more than for the entire annual figure nine years ago. The month after that, farmers produced 11.3 million pounds of pond-grown catfish.

All dimensions of the story are yet to be covered. Debby Mohr of the American Soybean Association offers one: She writes:

"It takes 1.5 to 1.7 pounds of feed to make one pound of catfish. About half the catfish ration is soybeans; one-third is corn; the rest is wheat, fish meal, vitamins and minerals. Catfish farmers in Mississippi ... feed their fish more than 2 million bushels of soybeans a year. And catfish farmers say that their markets have nowhere to go but up. So you can see why the farm-raised catfish industry is a bright spot in both the feed and soybean industries."

- - - -

**U.S. HORTICULTURAL EXPORTS RISE SEEN** A modest rise in horticultural exports is expected in fiscal year 1985. Larger shipments of pistachios and walnuts will strengthen tree nut exports. Frozen corn and potato products will continue strong, while fresh and dehydrated vegetables, hops, nursery products and alcoholic beverages may improve a little.

Lower unit values, particularly for oranges, grapes and pears will minimize gains for fresh fruit. Dried fruit exports are likely to fall because of weak raisin prices, although the volume will grow. Unit price drops will temper movement of canned fruit, particularly oranges, grapes and pears.

- - - -

**HIKE U.S. FEED  
GRAINS EXPORTS  
50% by 1990?**

Such a huge boost is no pipe dream. It can be done, speakers said at a recent meeting of the U.S. Feed Grains Council in Colorado Springs, Colo. That would mean annual sales of 83 million metric tons of feed grains abroad. The agricultural leaders focused on problems to be overcome and what they believe must be done to achieve that goal.

Here are a few paraphrased comments from the speakers:

Success would add \$4 million a year in new U.S. export sales. To set the stage for reaching the potential, the council must forge new partnerships with international development organizations and maintain its longstanding partnerships among commodity groups, agribusiness interests and with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

—W.L. Stowell, chairman of the Council

The Council already has targeted many large countries in dietary transition for future market development efforts. These nations, mainly, in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Latin America, show the income and population growth needed to increase the demand for feed grains imports.

—Allen Terhaar, director of planning for the Council

Public Law 480 already has done much to ease world hunger in many countries throughout the world. However, allocation of PL-480 help is determined by objectives in addition to fighting hunger. These include expansion of international trade, encouraging economic development in recipient nations, and promoting the foreign policy interests of the United States.

—Julia Change Bloch, assistant administrator for the Agency for International Development

Eventually, Egypt will start a program to place 500,000 head of buffalo on grain-fed rations. This can generate a demand for 1.25 million metric tons of feed grains. This is one of many new programs now being planned in many nations.

—Terry Vorachek, the Council's Middle East/Africa director

Cooperating with groups like the U.S. Feed Grains Council in promoting sales of U.S. farm products overseas is a major job of USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service. The agency also provides information on world crops, policies and markets; administers agricultural import regulations; represents U.S. agriculture on foreign trade matters; administers USDA's responsibility for Public Law 480, Commodity Credit Corporation export programs, and reports export sales.

- - - -

GRAIN OUTPUT TO SET RECORD -- Total world grain output projected for 1984/85 has been raised to a record 1,593 million tons. Major changes include a 10-million-ton increase in European Community production, a 2.7-million-ton gain in Eastern Europe and decreases of 5 million tons for the Soviet Union and 1.4 million tons in the U.S. crop.

- - - -

**JUST ONE  
STOOD UP,  
HOW COME?**

Margaret Rubail of Wilson Creek, W. Va., was the only woman who stood up when the speaker asked how many women in the room had served or were serving on their local farm cooperatives' boards. The occasion was a recent meeting of the National Institute on Cooperative Education in Bozeman, Montana. She also was a speaker on a panel about total member involvement in the organization.

Why the lonely response?

"I think many women have built invisible barriers for themselves," said Rubail. "There always are excuses: 'It's a man's world to be on the board,' 'It's a closed door,' 'I'd only be tolerated, not accepted.' But we can't let these roadblocks keep us from achieving our own goals and encouraging others, especially other women."

Another speaker, Edward Melby, director of Molt Farmers Elevator Co. in Montana, had good news on the subject.

Since 1966, said Melby, farm women have been encouraged to become active in the cooperative. Eighteen years ago, the cooperative ensured voting rights for farm spouses.

Rita Page Reuss, associate general counsel at Land O'Lakes, Inc., in Minneapolis, offered tangible steps to help women move up.

Reuss' suggestion: After checking their state laws, cooperatives could allow memberships to be held jointly by both husband and wife and permit either to vote. Or, have memberships held jointly and permit the vote to be shared, half to the husband and half to the wife. The wife's name could appear on the documents of legal partnerships and corporations, ensuring her membership.

- - - -

**WHY WHEAT EXPORTS  
OUTLOOK IS BRIGHT**

Widespread public attention has been focused on huge Soviet grain buys. While these purchases do figure big in the continually improving outlook for U.S. wheat exports in 1984/85, there's a lot more to the total picture. Here are some of the latest developments to which scant notice has been paid:

-- ITALY's demand for protein wheat is expected to remain strong this year despite record durum production.

-- KENYA is continuing commercial wheat and corn purchases in response to low stock levels.

-- CANADA's end-of-marketing-year wheat stocks were reported at lower than expected levels, reducing total supplies available for export in 1984/85.

-- AUSTRALIA is hit by a rail strike which already has affected wheat exports.

-- USSR purchases of U.S. corn already have passed the minimum required under the long term agreement.

- more -



-- EGYPT is short of summer feed, so more imports could be authorized.

-- MEXICO switched \$66.5 million of credit into feed grains. Additional sales are likely there.

-- European Community imports of corn gluten feed are expected to decline because of a cutback in milk production and cattle numbers.

- - - -

TURKEY HATCHERY -- Turkey eggs in incubators on September 1 totaled 12.4 million, 12% above the 11.1 million a year earlier, according to USDA's Crop Reporting Board.

The 13.5 million poults placed during August of this year in the United States were 7% above placements during the same month a year ago. Placements during the September-August 1984 period totaled 181 million, 1% less than placements during the comparable period in 1982-83.

- - - -

HIGHER SUGAR PRICES LIKELY -- Unless production is cut sharply, or signs point to a cut in 1985/86 supplies, higher sugar prices are likely in 1984/85, reports USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service.

This is a result of events that momentarily lowered sugar prices. The world sugar price fell to 4 cents a pound in August, it's lowest in 15 years. Prices weakened because negotiations to reach a new international sugar agreement failed. Hence, heavier world sugar surpluses are expected next year.

- - - -

VEGETABLE PRODUCTION UP -- Processing production for major vegetables is forecast at 11.2 million tons, an increase of 12% over last year.

Production of strawberries in the major producing states is estimated at 9.50 million hundredweight, up 12% over last year. Production of onions in all seasonal groups is forecast at 41.1 million hundredweight, a gain of 7% over last year. Summer storage onions should add up to 20.8 million hundredweight, up 8% over a year ago.



Clay Napier  
Editor, FARM PAPER LETTER